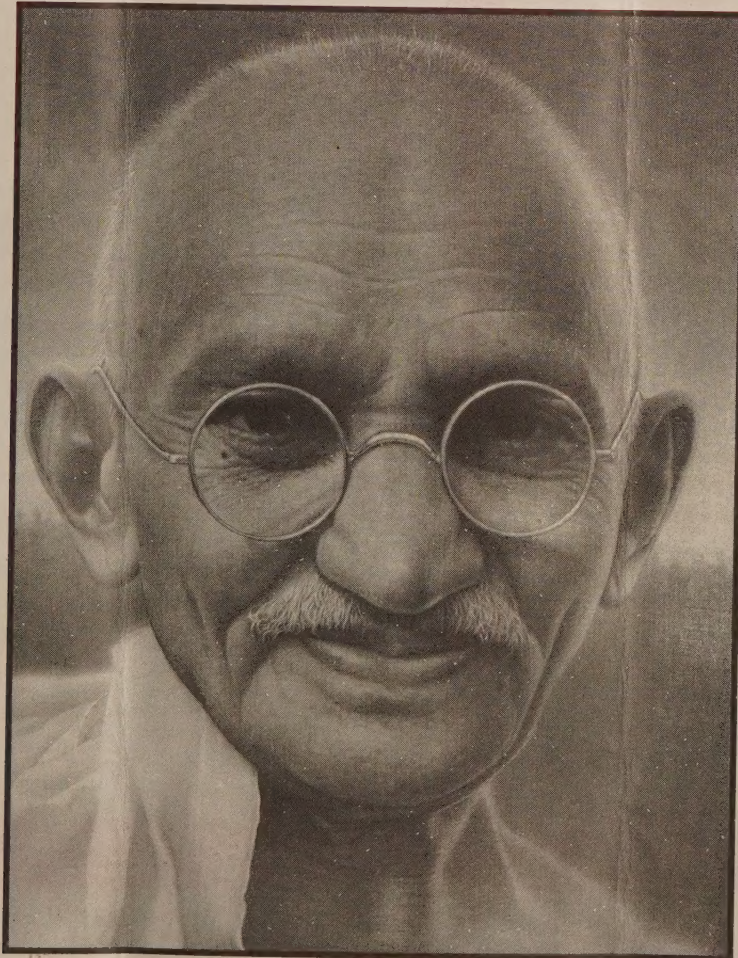




The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

AUGUST 2000



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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

AUGUST 2000

When my father visited me he never asked, 'How's business?' or even 'How are the children?' He'd pull cuttings out of his pockets and say angrily, 'Did you see that editorial in this morning's paper? Let's answer it!' My father was involved in mankind, and that is why he lived into his eighties. A man is like a tree: he dies on top first. (*Harry Golden*)

The office of government is not to confer happiness but to give men opportunity to work out happiness for themselves. (*William Ellery Channing*)

When a politician says, 'We're all in the same boat,' he usually means he wants to play captain while the rest of us do the rowing. (*Anon*)

A lesson that our country learned early and well, and which some countries unfortunately never learned or learned too late, is that each citizen had better take an active interest in running his country or he may suddenly find the country running him. (*Art Linkletter*)

Better to be a free bird than a captive king. (*Danish proverb*)

It is by the goodness of God that in our country we have those three unspeakably precious things, freedom of speech, freedom of conscience and the prudence never to practise either of them. (*Mark Twain*)

The Great Wall of China was a gigantic structure costing immense expenditure and labour, and when finished it seemed a superb way to gain security; but within a few years of its building it was breached three times by the enemy. Only note, it was breached, not by breaking down the wall but by bribing the gate-keepers. It was the human element that failed; what collapsed was character, proving insufficient to make the great structure men had built really work. A like fate awaits all those who, absorbed in political tasks, forget the spiritual foundations.

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August 2000

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Can't christians be Indians?

There are many who are willing to accept christians as full-fledged citizens of our land only grudgingly. There have also been instances when some people holding some fundamentalist ideologies have asked the christians to get out of India and go elsewhere as they do not belong to this land forgetting that India for centuries has been a land of diversity and there has been a flourishing pluralistic culture which has been its strength and glory.

This view stems from a wrong premise that christianity is an alien religion whereas the fact is that it is also an Asian religion originating in West Asia and was brought into India as early as 52 AD itself when according to tradition St. Thomas, one of the Apostles of Jesus Christ is believed to have landed in the West Coast of India; he is finally believed to have been martyred in the East Coast of South India which is presently known as Chennai. Not far from Chennai even today there is a hill-ock very close to the airport which is called St. Thomas Mount. And it is also a historical fact that a flourishing christian community has existed in India right from 1st Century AD. This is not to suggest that we subscribe to a view that every country should have a national religion emanating from its own soil! On the contrary we believe that a religion should be universal embracing within its fold all nations and all peoples from all directions.

There is also a mistaken notion that christianity was imported by East India Company and the British who established their colonial rule over India for almost 300 years. Hence christians they mistakenly believe have extra territorial loyalty. Again they seem to forget another fact of history that East India Company and the colonial rulers were not favourably disposed towards the missionaries and their activities here as in their perception they were not conducive to their activities in the land. But our fundamentalists and the self-styled nationalist forces patronised by them turn a blind eye to all these things and jump to the conclusion that christians have to be anti-national. This is the right time for us to focus our attention on this issue.

Let us briefly look at the contribution

christians have made in the last few decades towards nation building. It is an undeniable fact that christian contribution in the area of health care, education and social development has been laudable and exemplary. If the percentage of literacy has gone up in India today and there are areas in India which have attained 100 percent literacy, it is because of christians' initiative and commitment. If there is a general increase in health consciousness and mother-child care, if there is general improvement in hygienic conditions even in rural India, if there is a decline in the mortality rate of infants and women, if there is a rise in the longevity of Indians in general the credit to a large extent should go to christians. If there is holistic development of communities and an urge to move forward to utilise the benefits of advancement in technology and medicine it is because of christian enterprise and dedicated service.

Sometimes it is argued that christians have been doing all these things with an

A View from the Pew

ulterior motive of proselytisation but this is an allegation that has never been substantiated; and it can never be for that was never on the agenda of christians and the church. Even today the church's main agenda is not proselytisation but empowerment, enrichment and liberation of people. But if the liberated, empowered people whose lives have been enriched opt to convert to a religion of their choice why blame the christians for it? After all does not the constitution guarantee these people the right and freedom to choose their religion? As Rev.G.Dyvasirvadham has rightly observed, '*much more than forced conversions, these were powerful social statements that the converts made. Fed up with the marginalisation they experienced in the caste structures of the fragmented Indian society they found the new faith perhaps as an avenue to affirm their own personhood and strongly repudiated a system that did not even consider them as human beings with dignity*'. (South India Churchman, July 2000, Page 7).

The christian message by its very nature is a liberating message. The God of

the christians has always been a God who takes the side of the oppressed against the oppressors. A christian is therefore supposed to work for liberation in all areas of life, political, social, cultural, economic and relational. Even in the early church christians had to face riots and upheavals wherever they preached the good news, because the good news always aimed at liberating people; the vested interest who found themselves affected by this liberating message always organised an uprising against the christians.

In our society a section of the people has for long been subjugated and they were not even considered a part of civilised society. They were treated as untouchables and the whole society was organised on hierarchical lines one group under another group. The whole structure was based on a principle not of equality but of subjugation. To make sure that this concept of subjugation operated it was given a philosophical undergirding through the doctrine of *karma* and also given a religious sanction. The fatalistic view prevailed.

In this context a message of liberation is always bound to create ripples and that is what we see happening all around in India today. The people who have for centuries been subjugated and deprived of human dignity have now started thinking of liberating themselves and that certainly is a threat to the *status-quo*. Hence we find violence let loose wherever there is a clamour for freedom and independence and there are counter attacks and reprisals. But this is a society in transition which is experiencing the birthpangs of a new society which is bound to emerge in the years to come and the foundation of this new society will be liberty, equality and fraternity.

The christian community can not rest on its laurels and allow itself to become complacent. Those who have pioneered in the areas of health and hygiene and development can also venture into other vital areas such as media, politics, trade and commerce. It is time that the christian community woke up and prepared its sons and daughters to also venture out into the realms unknown and unexplored so that as the leaven in the dough the whole society is premeated with the liberating message of the gospel and the values of the kingdom.

53 years of independent India have been a great hope of the people of all walks of life towards a new community of prosperity and peace; fraternity and the possibility of becoming a new people, stability and self-sufficiency. The question that comes into the mind of the new generation standing at the threshold of the 21st century events in India is whether we have achieved any one of them to the fullest at all! The leaders at the top are fully involved in scams; there is growing unemployment leading to the frustration of youth, insolvable poverty and avoidable famine causing many farmers and peasants to commit suicide. None of these seems to alarm the leadership while the nation claims to have grown in Information Technology making rapid strides in this area. There has been a high rate of qualified youngsters leaving the country finding no hope back home.

India has been a land of contradictions with the second wealthiest man and the poorest of the earth sharing the same 'independent culture' and rich heritage of 'Indianness'. While the children still hold the text books that portray the picture of peace and tranquility of the Indian culture and philosophy, they are terrorized and fear-stricken in almost all states because of the forced violence from the domestic to the national level.

Many in India have become too religious to the extent of becoming the defender of their own faiths and acerbic critics of all other faiths, let come what may! And everyone wants to make India a kingdom of God of his own religion. In this context the children, the citizens of tomorrow in the nation are in a bizarre state. As a result countless of them have become party to extremism, drug addiction and other unproductive activities that weaken the nation.

All this lead us to recall to our minds one of the greatest personalities this land ever produced whom the whole world acclaimed as the great soul *Mahatma*. There were many leaders no doubt who roused the national patriotic emotions; but there was something

unique and different about this man which led the whole nation to soon recognise him as *Bapuji*, the father of the nation who went on to become one leader exemplary and remained an *icon* for his greatest movement called *ahimsa*, non-violence. Generation after generation all over the world continue to follow his principles what he believed to be the gospel of peace and non-violence.



Dr.Kim Yong Bock, Ms.Karin & Mireille seen with the Moderator & the General Secretary

Be it Martin Luther King Jr. who strictly adhered to this principle to desegregate Nashville's lunch counters in 1958 or Rosa Parks who quietly led the movement by refusing to get off the bus at Alabama in 1955 and thereby gave a boost to this civil rights movement and to the leadership of Luther King Jr. who finally became the victim sharing the same plight/sublime sacrifice as the *Mahatma*; be it Nelson Mandela who got infused with this spirit and continued this legacy of non-violence to dismantle the apartheid regime in South Africa and remained a conqueror in the 27 long years in prison; be it Dalai Lama who at the sight of Gandhi's cremation said, 'To me he was...the consummate politician, a man who put his belief in altruism above any personal considerations. I was convinced too that his devotion to the cause of non-violence was the only way to conduct politics.' Why is it that when others all over the world are emulating him none in his own country is there to follow in his foot step? This is a point well worth pondering over!

You will be glad to know that a separate department for Dalit and Advasis concerns has been inaugurated in the secretariat under the directorship of Rev.Daniel Premkumar who

has our best wishes. The CSI has launched a campaign for the Girl Child, and a consultation of the promoters for the Life Support Fund was organized from Aug. 1-3 here by the CSI and the BDM has been given the lead role. With this, all the congregations in the Church of South India at large, I hope, will take it as a commitment to empower someone who is hopelessly neglected in the base line of our communities. I therefore urge all the bishops, leaders and the worshipping members to uphold this movement and give it the impetus it needs.

We strongly condemn the dastardly murder of bishop Immanuel of the AELC. However this cautions the church and her leaders to be more conscious of managing the valuable properties and resources.

Rev.Bruce Greggerson of the Uniting Church of Canada visited us in July and brought greetings to us. I was also privileged to attend the executive committee of WARC in Bangalore along with the Deputy Moderator and the Treasurer. I commend the Rt.Rev.S.Vasanthakumar, the hosting bishop and an executive committee member of the same for his meticulous arrangements. Dr.Kim Yong Bock, a renowned *min-jung* theologian, Ms.Karin and Mireille after participating in the WARC meeting later visited the synod secretariat and brought greetings to us. I also conducted a retreat for the bishop Heber college staff at Thanjavur where they were challenged for a deeper and committed involvement in imparting value-based education and moulding the future of the precious youngsters.

I have been invited to attend the Provincial Secretaries Meet of the Anglican Communion at Toronto from Aug. 23rd to Sep. 2 during which time the Moderator also would be travelling in USA. Please uphold us in your prayers. As we enter into yet another year of independence I call upon all members of our church to rededicate themselves for enhancing of the new values in the process of building a new India.

G.Dyvasirvadani

Priorities: The Church's Commitment to Community Building

Rev. G. Dyvasirvadam

Thus far the Lord has led us in a marvelous way. Even as we give thanks to God for the grace with which we were guided all along the last few decades of our pilgrimage as a church we also remember with gratitude the tremendous contributions made by our parent generation. It is only fitting for us to pay homage to those visionaries of ours of the yester years the fruits of whose visions we are enjoying today.

We as a church are trying to redefine what our priorities are for the new decade. This time we made it a point to emphasise the real *locus* of consultation making it clear that the priorities of the church should evolve at the grass root level and should permeate into the higher echelons of decision making. This consultation is thus part of a big process we initiated where in fact we are cumulating the discussions held among the community of believers.

The church in India is caught up in a precarious situation. The context so demands that many of our religious concepts and structures have to be redefined to make it relevant to the changing times. If the continuity of the message of the gospel is to be of contemporary relevance in the context of successive generations it has to be re-lived with changed patterns of ministry.

The very purpose and nature of the church union movement is that by the union, the Church would become a sharper instrument of God's work, that there be greater peace, closer fellowship and fuller life within the church. There should also be renewed eagerness and power in the proclamation of the Gospel which is the lifeblood of the church. By the union it was ex-

pected that there may be a release of divine power for the fulfillment of God's purpose for the world. This is the basic theology of the CSI on which we have to fix our priorities and discuss matters in the consultations.

At the beginning of the new millennium this is going to be an important consultation enlarging the discussions of the church's priorities to the grass roots of all the dioceses. Such thorough analytical studies were made for the first time, as far as I can recall, in 1963 (Renewal and Advance), then in 1978 (CSI after 30 years) and in 1981 (Priorities for the mission of the church). It is our hope that a consensus has been arrived at after a thorough discussion with the local leadership in the dioceses.

Our emphasis this time is that the local congregations are given due importance by raising their voices and feelings about the practice and fulfillment of the mission of God. We affirm that each member of the congregation, men, women and children become the royal priesthood, holy nation, people purchased by God whose mission consists in announcing the virtues of him who called them from darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet 2:9).

By this exercise of consultation we should evolve methods and modalities of participating and working of the entire community in the Church of South India owning the mission as a common task of the church. I would like to draw your attention on two basic tenets i.e. self-sufficiency of each diocese and priority to the local congregations and communities.

A few concerns that I would like to draw to your kind attention to include the need for pastoral care in the local

congregations. One pastor is now looking after 14 to 20 congregations. It becomes impossible to give that needed pastoral care to the people. We should pursue the idea of a permanent diaconate with perhaps even the freedom for administering the sacraments.

We should also take care that adequate care is given to the pastors' families, specially those who serve in the villages. The church should take it as a responsibility to cater to the educational and other needs of the families of such pastors. If this concern is taken care of many more pastors would be willing to go the villages.

There should be more emphasis on the church's commitment to primary education and primary health care.

Our concern for social justice should enable us to transcend our "limitedness" to our own boundaries.

The concern for the girl child and the issues of women should come back to our central focus.

We should rejuvenate our laity formation.

Christian nurture should permeate into the very fabric of the church.

Youth and women should transcend being fellowships but transform into movements.

We should revamp our understanding of communication and ensure that we don't lag behind in the information era.

Adequate care must be taken for the optimum use of our properties.

The concept of the Village Community centres that we initiated should

now translate into a living experience of faith reflection where 250 such centres become the focal points of life-fullness.

The realisation of the needs of the Dalits and the Adivasis has led us into the initiation of a separate Department of Dalit and Adivasi concerns which I am sure would carry the ministry of the church towards the marginalised forward by leaps and bounds.

With more and more youngsters being lured into ways of violence and terrorism the Youth Department that we have initiated should focus on the formation of alternate communities rooted in life giving values.

The Diaconal Ministry should become a ministry of the people, by the people and for the people.

We have moved much ahead in Ecumenical Relations. The Communion of Churches in India is surely one step ahead of the CSI-CNI- MTC Joint Council. In the international scene the P.R.O.K has entered into a partnership with the Rayalseema Diocese. The Church of Sweden and CSI has come closer. The Evangelical Lutheran

Church in Wurttemberg is far closer now with the visit of Dr.Quark. The North Kerala Diocese has a new relationship with the Grace Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America. The Reformed Church in America, Presbyterian Church in America and the Episcopal Church in America would strengthen the relations with the dioceses of Trichy-Tanjore, Vellore, Dornakal and Rayalseema. We have to move forward from here.

The VELCOM programme should find its exclusive position yet again in our priorities with the support of the departments.

The CSI Life Support Fund should become the dream of this generation to turn to be a giving church supporting the needy.

The need is so great that it is hard to limit our priorities.

The Officers have this time found it fit to invite experts even as we discuss our priorities. Accordingly to discuss on the area of Health Ministries we have with us Dr.Arul Das the General Secretary of the CMAI, Dr.Shyam Prasad the Chairman of CMC Ludhiana

and Dr.Grace Ponniah Director of CMC Vellore. We have also invited Rev.Dr.Ipe Joseph the General Secretary of the NCCI to brief us of the National Scenario and the Nagpur declaration.

I pray that the Lord of the Cross and Grace would give us the vision and commitment for those in need. Let this consultation truly help to identify and define the priorities of the church not just according to an Episcopal understanding but a more expanded community understanding. Let it be the beginning of a concrete ministry in the beginning of an era where the hostility towards the church is increasing. While recognising that we are truly Indian our diakonia should seriously consider the pluralistic context of ours and respect the sister faiths. At the same time as we set our priorities we should be clear that *kerygma*/proclamation is the live wire of our faith experience.

It is only appropriate that I mention a word of thanks to all the partner churches who have graciously been partners with us in our ecumenical journey along the years bygone.

*

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WHAT DOES THE NATION EXPECT OF CHRISTIANS

P.C. Cyriac, I.A.S. Principal Commissioner and Commissioner of Commercial Taxes.

Our India is a unique nation - the largest democracy in the world, maintaining its secular and democratic character for more than half a century and conducting free elections at regular intervals. Here, fundamental rights are guaranteed to every citizen, by the constitution of the country. These fundamental rights include equality before the Law, equality of opportunity and prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. All citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression, to assemble peaceably and without arms, to form associations or unions, to move freely throughout the territory of India, to reside and settle in any part of India, to acquire, hold and dispose of property and to practise any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business. No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law. All citizens are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to profess, practise and propagate any religion. All these fundamental rights are enshrined in our constitution.

The successive governments of India have sincerely permitted its citizens to enjoy these fundamental rights. Wherever there was any difficulty, the independent judiciary has intervened to hold the balance even and uphold the Rule of Law. Thirteen general elections have been held, by and large in an orderly and peaceful manner, where the citizens had free and fair opportunity to cast their ballots in secrecy. The governments, both at the Centre and in the States, have been changed overnight, silently, by this decisive and visible enforcement of the peoples' will, through the ballot box. In short, a functioning, live, viable and secular democracy has been well and truly installed in this large country, effectively. And that too, at a time when other countries in Asia and Africa which

attained independent nationhood along with us could not maintain their democratic forms of government. In the encircling gloom of dictatorial regimes and 'guided' democracies, India alone has been shining as the beacon light where the individuals' freedom is respected.

For this, all citizens have to thank the founding fathers of the constitution and the national leaders at the time of Independence. And they have to congratulate themselves for managing to keep the flame alive. And the persons belonging to minority groups like christians and muslims have every reason to be happy about living in such an open and democratic society, where their freedom of religion is fully protected in a most real manner.

The first task of every christian in India should, therefore, be to remain loyal to his country and its constitution. Every one of us should strive to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of our nation.

I do not wish to omit to mention the recent incidents in some States in the North, where many christian missionaries - priests and nuns - have been ill-treated, molested and even killed. A few churches and other places of worship have been attacked. We all know that the missionaries have done no crime except bringing education and healthcare to poor villagers, especially in tribal areas. The vested interests bent upon continuing their exploitation of these depressed classes would naturally resent their selfless service and do everything within their power to stop them. But there is no need to be cowed down by threats. The christians must follow the example of Jesus Christ and forgive the perpetrators of these terrible crimes and pray for them. But we all know that the governments cannot and will not forgive the persons who commit criminal offences. So, let us be peaceful and leave

it to the governments concerned to bring the offenders to book. Jesus has set an example for christians to actively work to promote harmony among all communities. In addition to this, Indian christians, have a special duty to lead lives in a simple and exemplary manner and function as Lord's own ambassadors in a society where they constitute a microscopic minority of two percent. We have been lucky to receive the gift of faith. This gift has been bestowed on us not as a reward for any significant work we did, it is a pure gift. He, who is the truth, the way and the life, has chosen to reveal Himself to us. Jesus once told his disciples, 'I have chosen you and not you, me'. These words are particularly relevant to us in India. Almost as soon as he had ascended to heaven, he commissioned the most daring of his disciples - Thomas, to go to India, obviously for no merit on our part. And we became privileged to know Jesus, long long before the celebrated christian nations of the world had even heard of him.

So, we Christians in India owe a special debt of gratitude to the master who has called us. We have been selected from the many. And we have to cooperate with him in making the selection fruitful. No doubt, we all know this. But over the last two thousand years, how have we responded? What type of leadership have we given to witness Christ? Is Christ today loved, honored, obeyed and accepted in our country? Or, is Christianity an object of suspicion, fear, contempt and ridicule? What is our role in presenting Christ to our society? How far have we made him acceptable to others?

Christ said: "He that would follow me, let him take up his cross and follow me". Yes, that is the christian message. The message of the Cross. The death of Christ on the cross has made it a symbol of endurance, suffering, humiliation and willingness to welcome insults. It

is this life of the cross that has been promised to a follower of Christ. To a world in frenzied pursuit of wealth, power, pleasure and glory, Christ has only one supreme advice to give, "Renounce them", He has never offered to make us rich and prosperous if we follow him. On the contrary, he has promised only trials, tribulations and sufferings. In unequivocal terms, Jesus has condemned man's pursuit of wealth. The reference to the camel and the eye of the needle, the rich young man who sadly went away as he had many possessions, the man who gloated over the overflowing granary, but destined to die that very night, the splendour of care-free birds and the lilies in the field - they are no mere allegories or idle words, but simple, eternal facts of life. And yet, how many of us take these exhortations seriously? Have we at least tried to conduct ourselves as fair minded, just and conscientious people? If you are a businessman, are you true to your customer? Are you a profiteering trader indulging

in black marketing and selling spurious wares? As a government official, do you delay the files in your office in order to collect a bribe? As a politician, do you give honest and selfless service? As an employee, do you give a fair day's work? As an employer, do you exploit your workers and deny them a fair wage?

We may not be able to preach about God amongst the people who have not heard about him. We may not be bold enough to face adversities and suffer death for His sake. We may not be able to renounce everything, tied down as we are, to our families and the related responsibilities. But, let us at least lead christian lives, following christian values. By our simple life-style, loyalty and commitment to our jobs, sincere and honest approach to our customers and the importance and value we attach to discipline and orderly conduct, we must show the others in our society that we are different, that we are principled and conscientious. This way, we can hope to create an impact and make everyone

realise that christians are different; and that they are different because they are believers in Christ's teachings. Let us always be on the side of truth and justice. Let us not be on the side of the extortionists, the corrupt, the black marketers and the swindlers of public money. Let us be always willing to serve and love our fellowmen. If this expression of true christianity becomes visible in our daily christian life, then it would be live, dynamic, adorable and respectable and hence acceptable to everyone. This way, we shall be able to attract everyone to Jesus Christ. We may not be able to interpret Christ effectively in words, to a society with a 6000-year history of religion, civilization and philosophy. But our good deeds and the principled ways of life will eloquently speak and bear witness to Him. This way, we shall be able to discharge our duty to our Motherland as well as to our religion and thus bring glory to our country and God!

*

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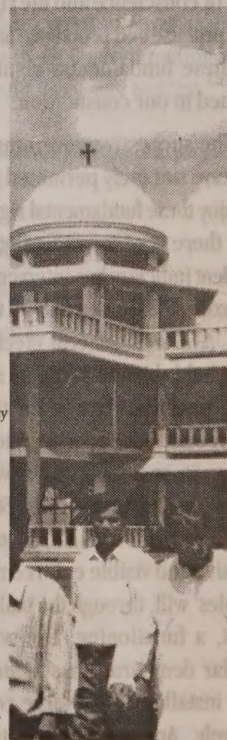
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CHRISTIANS AND NATION-BUILDING

Valson Thampu

It was customary in the nineteen sixties to wax eloquent on the christian contributions to nation building. Somehow, this rhetoric did not survive the eighties. It is good to see this core concern stage a comeback now in the early months of the new century.

The main frame of reference in the '60s for evaluating the christian contribution to nation building used to be the institutions of health and education run by the church. In retrospect it would seem that the idea of nation building was projected as an apology for diluting the religious culture of our institutions. It was felt, somehow, that focusing on the christian character of our institutions was out of sync with the spirit of our times, and bordered, seemingly, on communalism.

The eagerness to avoid communalism was laudable; for the biblical faith abhors that aberration. But it is debatable if diluting the spiritual element in our institutional culture did any good either to the nation or to us.

Perhaps it is necessary to be wary of the "building" part of the concept of "nation building". Is a nation 'built' brick by brick, or does it grow organically like a seed germinating and eventuating into a tree?

Is nation-building only a physical and material activity, or is it a creative process with a core of mystery at the center of it? The idea of "building" carries with it an exclusive focus on material resources. This idea gets reinforced within a secular-materialistic scheme of things.

Nation vs. people?

One lamentable consequence of this material-centered idea of nation "building" has been that the focus was shifted from the people to everything

else. Progress became the national creed, and people ceased to matter. This led, eventually, to the anomaly that progress could be achieved at the expense of the people. Over 18 million people, to take just one example, have been displaced in the name of development since 1947 and only a third of them have been rehabilitated. Significantly, about 75% of the so-called projected affected people (PAP) were tribals and adivasis. It did not matter to the powers that be, as long as the nation progressed. India was on the move, leaving its sons and daughters far behind. Such an idea of development should have been seen and contested as an insult to the Gandhian dream of a nation of righteousness and, more importantly, to the christian idea of the centrality of human beings in the social and political culture of a nation.

It is a disturbing thought that not many among us objected to the sacrilege of this anti-people developmentalism. This was not because the church did not care for human beings. This was largely because, when it came to nation building, we thought mostly of our contributions in the fields of education and health, often in a statistical and quantitative way.

In the meanwhile, those who were entrusted with the duty to build India were undoing the nation. Profligate governance plunged this country deeper and deeper into internal and external debt. Money borrowed for developmental purposes ended up in private pockets. Even the then Prime Minister admitted in public that a rupee put into development shrank into 15 paise by the time it got to the people. This should have created a crisis in our

confidence as to the contributions we were making to nation building through our educational institutions. Not less than 75% of the political and bureaucratic leadership in this country were shaped on the anvil of the so-called christian education. Yet they were the ones who prostituted the integrity and dignity of our country. The products of our schools and colleges were taking this nation apart, brick-by-brick.

I am passionately convinced that christians have a significant and foundational contribution to make in the area of nation building. The resources God has entrusted to us through the Bible, through the vast reservoir of Christian thought, and the dynamism of biblical spirituality are excitingly relevant to building a vibrant nation on the foundation of justice, peace and righteousness. But having relevant resources is one thing, and being able to use them effectively is quite another. In the parable of the talents, the servant who was given one talent was condemned for not using it properly. We are more like the servant who was given five talents. The difference is this that we behave no better than the servant who got only one.

Christians can, and must, play a creative and redemptive role in nation-building. For this to happen, there are a few pre-requisites.

1. We must enunciate a Bible-based spirituality as relevant to nation building. Nation building involves much more than educating or healing or helping a few million people in need. When Jesus said that we are meant to be the 'salt of the earth' and the 'light of the world', what He implied was that the Christian presence in a society or nation is required to impact its total



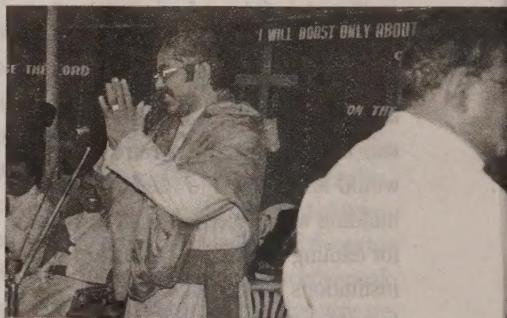
*The Rt. Rev. M. Durai and Mrs. Soodamani
Durai at the felicitation function*



*A 100 member choir at the felicitation
function*



*At the felicitation function with the synod
officers*



*Bishop Durai saying 'vanakkam' with folded
bands - Indian style*



*The Most Rev. K. Samuel offering the right
band of fellowship to the new bishop*



*The Rt. Rev. M. Durai being installed bishop in
the diocese of Coimbatore*



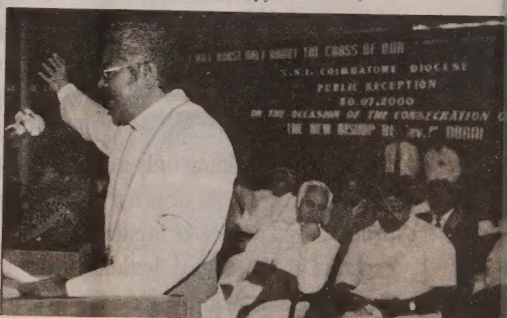
*Bishop Durai in the company of the former
Moderator and Mr. Jeyaseelan M.P.*



*The band leading the procession towards the
church*



*A section of the congregation gathered at the
Immanuel Church*



*The singing Bishop regaling the vast
concourse of well wishers*



*The Moderator felicitates the Bishop - the
former Moderator translates*

context and culture. Neither salt nor light limits itself to certain pockets of the given context. Unfortunately, what has limited our effectiveness in the larger context is the growing obsession with our numerical insignificance. It is time we realized that this crippling fixation on our numerical disadvantages is an admission, albeit unwitting, of our deficient spiritual vitality. Spiritually, our effectiveness does not depend on our numerical strength. It depends on our abiding in the Lord and the Lord abiding with us (Jn. 15: 4-6).

2. Secondly, we must re-think our missiology. Even though we talked for a while on the subject, nation building was never really factored into our missiology. A missiological perspective on nation-building could have had a prophetic impact on the Indian scene by insisting that a nation is made up of its people, and that neither an ideology nor a flag could rob the people of their centrality. It was this passionate conviction that made the words of Jesus vibrate with power. "Sabbath is made for man; not man for Sabbath." We are yet to address the task of developing a God-centered and pro-people missiology for nation building.

For far too long we have got used to the stereotype of enlarging the Kingdom of God within a nation. Perhaps it is biblically more appropriate to think of unveiling the Kingdom of God within every nation. The challenge no longer is to produce some committed missionaries. The challenge is to imbue the nation with the missionary spirit so the State fulfills its vocation as a care-giver.

3. We also need to be clearer and biblically sound on the resources required for nation building. A spiritual vision and ethical values are at least as important for nation building as infrastructure, education, science and tech-

nology. A nation must stand or fall on the foundation of the character of its people; and it is in this respect that India faces the grossest poverty at the present time. Practically every Christian institution of education was founded with the stated goal of "character building". This character-building must be seen as the corner stone of nation building. In St. Stephen's college we pray that God may so guide and preserve the character of the College so that the students nurtured in it be "fit alike for their citizenship of heaven and earth".

Unfortunately, prayers apart, character-formation remains a low priority in our educational institutions.

4. A major challenge that we have to address in respect of nation building is the rise in our times of a culture of aggression, violence and negativity. We are mandated to be peacemakers. Peace is a pre-condition for development. But peace making has its cost, not less than war making. It was to this sober truth that Jesus was seeking to draw our attention in saying that we should "turn the other cheek" in the face of aggression. We need to be concerned that a self-destructive spirit of aggression stalks our country at the present time. This we need to do, not just because we are its prime targets today. We need to respond redemptively to this reality because this will tear apart the very fabric of our country.

In this context it is necessary to recognize that accidents of history have situated world religions in a model of mutual conflict. The mix-up between christianity and western culture, besides, has imparted a martial flavour to the biblical faith. The priority that a great many christians have come to ascribe to conquering other faiths, even rooting them out from the face of the earth, is more a byproduct of this his-

torical background than a genuine expression of the Christian spirit.

Spiritually, the priority can only be one's own spiritual deepening and maturity. If we seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, everything else will be given to us (Mtt. 6:33). Such an approach to evangelization has nothing to do with the conflictual model within which many seem to function, albeit unwittingly. Despite the heroic commitment and fabulous sincerity involved, this serves mainly to aggravate communal conflict which, in turn, corrupts the general atmosphere all the more. In this way, we become party to the communal agenda, say, of the Hindu fundamentalists. Our interest in nation building, if worth anything at all, must express itself today as eagerness to control and eliminate the virus of conflict and confrontation so spontaneously preferred by the communalists in every religious sector. Neither the Kingdom of God nor any nation has been built through conflict. The Kingdom of God is justice, peace and joy in the Lord.

5. To be able to play a constructive role in nation building, we need to exorcise ourselves of the spirit of communalism. In its essence, communalism is the outlook that relates to the larger context only to bargain the best of terms for oneself, even in a state of unconcern for the wholeness of the whole. Largely because we think ourselves numerically insignificant, we tend to marginalize ourselves *vis-à-vis* the problems faced by others as well as the larger affairs of the country. While we are very sensitive to the atrocities inflicted on us, for example, we are mostly unconcerned about the atrocities routinely inflicted on the dalits of this country. We need to think less of ourselves and more of others. That is the challenge that the Lord Jesus Christ has left for us. The Son of Man

came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for the sins of the world (Mk.10:45).

6. The life of Jesus was remarkably free from the keenness to preserve and perpetuate his rights. Indeed, the rights discourse -as we know it today- is almost wholly absent from the Bible. Jesus gave up all his rights and privileges in order to embark on his mission. He emptied himself (Phil. 2:5-11). Today we seem to be drifting from this spiritual discipline. The practical truth is that as long as we remain focused on ourselves, we shall have no eyes to see the needs of others. As a matter of fact, the spirituality that inspires and sustains mission is the spirituality of self-denial (Mtt. 16:24). When Jesus was on the Cross, he was mocked by people saying, "He saved others, he cannot save himself!" They did not know the simple truth of history that those who want to save themselves will not save others. More likely, they will sacrifice others in order to save themselves. It needs to be asked as to where we stand in relation to the model that Jesus has given to us.

Corruption and communalism both result from wanting to save oneself at the expense of everything and everyone else. Nothing more is required to destroy a nation, as the last 50 years of our nation building proves beyond any doubt. The most foundational contribution that Christians can make to nation building in the Indian context is the propagation of a spiritual culture in which there is a balance between concern for one's welfare and commitment to the welfare of others. In the caste-dominated Indian culture, we have been perennially incapable of "loving our neighbors as ourselves". Without this spiritual discipline, no amount of material progress is going to help us build a healthy and righteous nation.

The emerging context

This is indeed the most opportune time for us to re-think our role in nation building; for we, along with the rest of the world, are caught up in a period of radical and rapid changes when the very foundations are shaking and giving way. In the nineteen sixties, it was within the paradigm of nation-states that we discoursed on nation building. Now a new world order has all but superseded the nation-states. This has tremendous consequences especially for India. It is clear that the caste system, the citadel of upper caste hegemony, has now come under unprecedented stress and strain. Indeed the worldview within which the caste system was crafted is fast sinking into an ocean of irrelevance in front of us. It is this that has imparted a spasm of anxiety in the fundamentalist Hindu fold, causing knee-jerk reactions of upper caste assertiveness in the form of *Hindutva*.

This could not but have aggravated the communal scenario in our country. But this is going to be a passing phase. The best we can do for the country and for ourselves is to fast, not feed, this spirit of conflict. The allegations of the *Sangh Parivar* that Christians are working according to a sinister plan and that their goal is to wipe out Hinduism from the land of its birth, and that they are engineering mass conversions to that end, are all aimed at creating the rationale for a culture of conflict. Such a culture, in their thinking, is necessary for the perpetuation of their own caste interests. Christians should ensure that they do not, in any wise, reinforce this culture of confrontation and conflict. The spirit of negativity that a conflictual culture breeds will cripple our developmental urge, corrupt our work culture and dissipate our national energies. The upper caste goal - the goal of Hindu

fundamentalists- is to preserve and perpetuate the status quo which is wholly to their advantage. The Christian task is to usher in a new society based on justice and equality. We will be distracted and disabled vis-à-vis this creative mission if we allow ourselves to be dragged into profitless conflicts.

Unfortunately, influenced as we are by a general atmosphere of the will to power, the prospect of avoiding conflicts with the forces of majoritarian fundamentalism is likely to strike us as cowardly or un-dramatic. Consider how Jesus preferred to pass through a hostile crowd and not get bogged down to conflicts. He did that not because he was a coward, but because he had a clear sense of purpose. It is in this area that we need to gain clarity. We may have all the justification on our side for wanting to take on the forces of injustice. But our primary calling is not to 'resist evil', but to overcome it. The distinction here is between a negative and a positive outlook on life. Those who are negative in their spirit revel in conflicts. Those who are positive are focused on the mission of their life, and will not allow circumstantial conflicts to hijack them along the way. Nor will they flee from risks, unless such retreats are to profit the mission at hand. But there is no litmus test to establish the authenticity of one's spiritual choice: whether one avoids conflict for one's own sake or for the sake of the mission of Christ. That has to be left to the accountability of the individual before God. One thing is certain, a conflictual relationship with the world around us is sure to minimize, even abolish, our freedom to evangelize. I would imagine that it was for this reason that Jesus has commanded that we should relate to the world in love.

Our minimum agenda in nation building must be the creation of an

egalitarian society. The transformative power of biblical spirituality stems from its dogmatic assumption that all are equally the children of God and that discriminations based on social, economic and cultural variables are blasphemous in the sight of God. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither rich nor poor. He came to dismantle the walls of separation. Separation is the logic of hierarchy and inequality, as is well illustrated by the caste system.

It is because the christian faith did not adequately engage the challenge of inequality and caste practices -instead, succumbed to these forces of social inertia- that the community remained virtually frozen for decades. Contrary to the astronomical projections, the proportionate christian presence in this country has only dwindled. From 2.4% in 1981 christians dwindled to 2.3% in the 1991 census. History has proved that individual conversions by themselves do not make much headway in respect of social transformation. The ultimate Christological challenge to "make disciples of nations" needs to be engaged (Mtt. 29:19.). I would argue that the priority in the coming years should be to infuse our villages and people groups with biblical values rather than to convert a few individuals. Once these values are caught, it will be only a matter of time before people make the right choice for the right kind of reasons.

If I read the emerging context aright, I am fairly certain that the cyber age is going to impact people's approach to religion in a radical way. Very likely, people are no longer going to be confined exclusively to their respective religious folds. The pains and pressures of life are multiplying and religions are failing as the traditional refuges from the tumult of life. This is not because religion is irrel-

evant, but because escapist versions of religions are in vogue in every sector. Such a model of religion cannot empower people to cope with their predicaments. In such a situation they are sure to look everywhere in search of help. Ironically, those who have realized this contemporary truth are not the thinkers and custodians of religion. They are the vendors in cyber space. It is incredible how many sites are available already offering all sorts of spiritual help. Even more significantly, but for some exceptions, these sites do discriminate between religions.

Whatever is found helpful from various religious scriptures and traditions are posted on the Net. And people are going to shop around, unhampered by traditional loyalties and inhibitions. It is important that as christians we take note of this very significant development, and engage the opportunities and challenges thereof. If used properly, the scope of the Net might enable us to reach out to millions of non-christians daily even in the privacy of their life.

In conclusion, there are two priorities that we need to address before we can make significantly constructive contributions to nation building. *The first* is the spiritual renewal of our own community. Perhaps this is the last thing that most people want to hear about. The fashion now-a-days is to reform everybody else. Reforming oneself is seen as self-defeat! But spiritually self-transformation is the key to changing others. The greatest contribution we can make to the Indian context is to become an authentic spiritual community that embodies the culture of the Kingdom of God in the Indian context. If, on the contrary, there is little to distinguish the christian community from the rest of the society, the tall claims that we make and the pious postures that we adopt could only go

against the Gospel of Christ. The simple truth is this: the nobler our ideals and values, the greater will be the resentment and contempt we provoke when we violate them in our own life. A thief will not shock anyone by telling lies. People expect him to. But a saint will make many indignant by being merely worldly.

Only consider how vehemently Jesus condemned the Pharisees and Sadducees, and how comparatively more tolerant he was of the failures of ordinary people, and the point we are making here becomes clear enough.

As a person who functions in a variety of situations, including multi-religious initiatives and social action movements, I am concerned that the public image of our community has reached its lowest ebb, ever.

Secondly, we must work towards a shift from religion to spirituality. Ideally, religion and spirituality are inseparable. But in times of decay, religion becomes a contradiction of spirituality, which seems to be the case at the present time. Religion has become a theatre of aggression, untruth, communalism and mean-mindedness. It is proving a divisive rather than a cementing force. Hate rather than love, domination rather than service, cruelty rather than compassion mark the sphere of religion today. In the process religion is becoming a threat to human dignity, nobility and well-being. Jesus did not come to found a new religion; he came to school us in the basics of spirituality. The practical implications of this spirituality comprise what is unique in his life and work. He was free in the Spirit to reach out and relate to all sorts of people, sinners as well as saints. He was free to speak the truth, even if it upset and enraged the listeners. Above all, he was strikingly positive, constructive and redemptive in his outlook and out-

reach. His spirituality cried out for justice for all people, as even Isaiah foretold it would (Is. 42:1-5). He was committed to fullness of life for all people. This involved the unveiling of the godliness hidden in every human being; the lifting of the bushel so that the hidden light of godliness became visible (Mtt. 5:14-16). If the christian community does not imbibe and propagate

this spirit, we shall fail our country in the most crucial phase of its self-definition. Events in recent times leave us with no excuse at all for not knowing that it is high time we exercised our calling to "preach and heal" in the national context. How we go about doing that, and what spiritual discipline we evolve and maintain, are all matters of earth-shaking importance both

for us and for our country. All we know is that the God of the Bible who sent His Son to die for the sake of the world cannot be indifferent to the destiny of a billion human beings. If only the Church in India imbibes this sense of awesome responsibility, it would be transformed and inspired to play its legitimate role in building the India of our dreams.

THE LEPROSY MISSION INDIA

A Leading charitable organisation in the field of leprosy for the last 125 years has established a

"Centre for Health Education and Research in Mass Media".

The activities of the Centre include - *production of health education materials and to develop pro-active media strategy for effective dissemination of socio-medical issues including Leprosy, Hepatitis B, Tuberculosis, HIV & AIDS. Providing training, consultation and resources in health education to health professionals.*

Requires

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Qualification : *Post graduate degree/Diploma in Mass Communication/Journalism.*

Age : *Minimum 40 years.*

Experience : *At least 10 years experience in Mass Media including 2 years in Mass Media training and planning.* Must have worked with the print and electronic media in a supervisory position. Should have ability to synergise all aspects of health education in a multi-media scenario. Be proactive in preparing mass media training strategies. Should have ample exposure in the area of public communication. Should be a good organiser.

Salary : Commensurate with the qualification and experience. The Mission shall provide free furnished accommodation.

Also requires Studio Engineers - Should be at least B.E. (Electronics/Sound) with at least 5 years experience in multi-camera set ups, editing and creative shooting.

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Interested candidates may apply within one month of publication to:

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New Delhi - 110 001.

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Fax : +91 11 371 0803

E-mail : tlmindia@del2.vsnl.net.in

KARNATAKA SOUTHERN DIOCESE

Though youth were active and youth fellowships were functioning at local church level, hitherto there was no organized set up of Youth Fellowship at the diocesan level. The diocesan youth assembly met for the first time at Mangalore at the Fatima Retreat House, Mangalore. 94 youth delegates representing various churches under the Karnataka Southern Diocese were present, among which 22 were girls. The Rt.Rev.C.L.Furtado presided over the meeting. Mr.Reginald Soans, Diocesan Youth Director coordinated the Meet. Rev.D.Bangera, Diocesan Treasurer; Rev.S.Jathana, Area Chairman, Rev.S.D.Aiman, Area Treasurer, Rev.F.Anil Kumar, Convener of Diocesan Christian Education Committee were present. Mr.Lenin Amanna, Diocesan Vocational Guidance Officer and Dr.Suranjan Maben, Member of Diocesan '*Aikyaatha*' Team were invitees. A constitution was adopted for democratic set-up of functioning of the Diocesan Youth Fellowship from the grass-root level, i.e., local church level.

Career Guidance & Youth Leadership Conference

Diocesan level conference was held at the Fatima Retreat House, Mangalore preceding the Youth Assembly Meet, for the youth representing various churches under the Karnataka Southern Diocese. About 112 youth were present.

Mr.Lenin Amanna, Vocational Guidance Officer, welcomed the delegates and leaders and briefed about the vocational guidance facility available at the diocese assisted by the Kassel Education Fund.

Rev.F.Anil Kumar, Convener of Diocesan Christian Education Committee conducted the Bible Study on the theme: '*Get, Set to the New Millennium*'.

Mr.Renold Pinto, Director, Career Guidance Information Bureau, St. Aloysius College, Mangalore gave a talk on Career Guidance. The half a day's session conducted by Mr.Renold Pinto gave detailed information about the Career Opportunities, the qualifications re-

quired, career fields of scope at the present situation; self employment training and opportunities, facilities available through government and voluntary organisations etc.

Mr.Joslin Lobo, Reader, College of Social Work, Mangalore gave a talk on the topic - '*Communication Skills & Personality Development*' and explained the need of the same for the students in their future study career.

Rev.Osmond Shiri, Diocesan Coordinator for Counseling Ministry gave a talk on the topic - '*Youth Leadership*'. He explained how the present teenagers should develop qualities to become leaders in the Church and Society. He also stressed teenagers to be away from social ailments like drug addiction, etc., develop good qualities, and to work hard in their career either in jobs in government, public & private sectors or through self-employment to become leaders of the future in the church and society.

Career Literatures & Information were circulated to the delegates who were requested to take leadership at their congregation level to give vocational and career guidance to the church members and asked them to collect information from the Diocesan Vocational Guidance Department.

Diocesan Level Programme at Mangalore was organized jointly by the Catholic Diocese of Mangalore and CSI Karnataka Southern diocese at Nehru Maidan, Mangalore. The programme was preceded by 3 kilometer long grand procession from 4 directions of the city headed by bishops and pastors. The tableaux, floats, music, songs and waving of flags by all the participants was impressive. Most of the participants were wearing special cream-color banians and caps. There was *Dollu* dance and dance dramas based on the birth, life and ministry of Christ. The Rt.Rev.Dr.C.L.Furtado, The Rt.Rev.Dr.Aloysius Paul D'Souza; Dr.Shantharam Shetty famous bone specialist representing Hindu Community and Mrs.Sara Abubakar, famous writer representing Muslim Community delivered messages the choir gave a stirring

performance.

Udupi District Level Programme was held at Mother of Sorrows Church Compound, Udupi. The programme was preceded by procession from Christian High School, Udupi with tableaux, floats, music and songs. The Rt.Rev.Dr.Aloysius Paul D'Souza, The Rt.Rev.Dr.C.L.Furtado, and leaders from Hindu and Muslim Community delivered messages which was followed by music, skits and dance-drama.

All these programmes brought out the Ecumenical Relationship between various denominations and christian unity especially among the youth and women.

Ordination of Deacons and Presbyters was held at CSI Shanthi Cathedral on Sunday, 5th March 2000. The Rt.Rev.C.L.Furtado, the bishop conducted the ordination service. Rev.J.K.Salins, Convenor, Ministerial Committee was the leader. Rev.Dr.J.S.Sadananda, Principal Karnataka Theological College, Mangalore delivered the Lord's Message. The following were ordained: *As Presbyters* : 1. Rev.(Mrs.) Sarojini Soans 2. Rev.John Sumathi Paul 3. Rev.Edward S.Karkarad. *As Deacons* : 1. Rev.William Branham Kunder 2. Rev.Johnson Jayakumar Kotian 3. Rev.V.Devakumar.

The Balmatta Musical Association and the Karnataka Theological College Students rendered special songs.

-Mr.Lenin Amanna

BOOK STORE AT THE SECRETARIAT

Ever since the Rev. G. Dyvasirvadham took charge of the Synod Secretariat there has been something new added on from time to time. This time an ISPCK Book Store was inaugurated on July 18, 2000 in the foyer of the Golden Jubilee Auditorium. The first book was purchased by the Deputy Moderator, the Rt. Rev. B. P. Sugandhar in the august presence of the Synod Officers and the members of the Priority Consultation Committee.

Here is an opportunity for all the pastors and visitors to the Synod Secretariat to buy useful books at unbelievable concessional rates. Happy Reading!

Karnataka Southern Diocese Pastors Retreat:

The pastors of the Karnataka Southern Diocese under the leadership of Bishop C.L.Furtado had their retreat from 26 - 29 June 2000 at the Retreat cum Lay Training Centre, Dharwad. The focus of the retreat was, 'Pastoral Ministry

addresses. Study reports on Christian Marriage Act - present position, financial growth, charismatic movement, conversion today and leadership-cum-conducting meetings were presented by the Bishop and few other pastors. The Karnataka Northern Diocese and the Bishop Paul J.K.Balmi arranged a reception and interaction session between the pastors of both the dioceses. It was in-

Karnataka region from 12 - 14 July 2000 at the Karnataka Theological College (*Sabodaya*) Mangalore. Thirty five pastors from the three dioceses took part. Bishop C.L. Furtado, Rev.Dr.J.S.Sadananda, Rev.Dr.Hanibal Cabral, Prof.Hilda Royappan and other resource persons gave excellent presentation on counselling. The presentation and the practical session kept the pas-



for the New Millennium'. Bishop C.L.Furtado gave constructive leadership for the retreat. Rev.Dr.Samson Prabhakar conducted two meaningful Bible Studies. The Rt.Rev.Dr.George Isaac and Rev.G.Devakadasham gave theme ad-

ded an experience of closer fellowship and spiritual renewal to the pastors.

Training in Counselling:

A special programme in counselling was arranged for the pastors of the

tors involved in the programmes throughout. All expressed their satisfaction about the training programme. Rev.Osmond Shiri coordinated the training very efficiently.

Rev.G.Devakadasham, Director, PAD

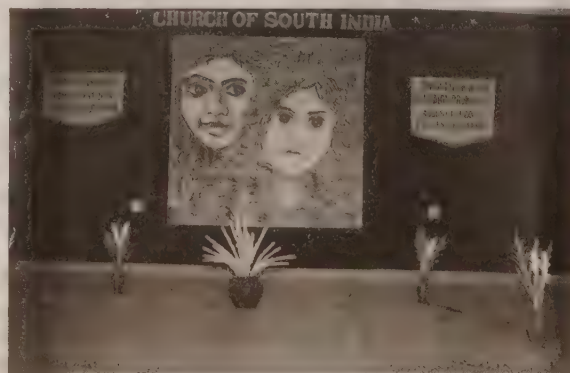
CSI'S GIRL CHILD CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

A firm foundation was laid for the historic commitment of the Church of South India to the cause of the Girl Child at the Consultation for the Campaign Promoters held between 1 - 3 August 2000 in the CSI Centre, Chennai.

A core team comprising of the President of the Diocesan Women's Board, Convenor of the Socio Economic Board and the Youth Board, Pastoral Representative and Youth Activist was deputed by their respective Diocesan Bishops to participate in the Consultation.

The Rt. Rev. B.P. Sugandhar, Deputy Moderator, the Rev. B.D. Prasada Rao, Director of the Department of Christian Education and the Rev. C. V. Theodore, Director of the Communications Department led the

inaugural worship which symbolised the launch of the CSI Campaign for the Girl Child and the CSI Life Support Fund for the life



affirming struggles of those on the margins.

The General Secretary of the CSI, the Rev. G. Dyvasirvadam, delivered the first keynote

address "Church's Participation in the struggles of the Girl Child". He spelt out his vision for the Girl Child emphatically through powerful illustrations culled out from real life where children especially girls were exploited in fireworks factories and in the cotton fields. He called upon the participants to own the vision.

Advocacy Kit was released to the Glory of God soon after. The Treasurer, Mr. Frederick William greeted the participants and cautioned against all possible pitfalls that may derail the momentous programme of the CSI and its Life Support Fund. All the Directors of the various departments resolved to move and work together in actualising the vision of the Church.

- Anne SM Rajkumar

Medico Pastoral Concerns on Aids

A three day Workshop on Medico Pastoral Concern on Aids was conducted at the Arogyavaram Medical Centre, Madanapalle, Diocese of Rayalaseema from 9th to 10th of June 2000. It was organised in collabora-

tion with the Christian Medical Association of India. About 60 people participated in this Workshop. Dr. Shobana Yohan, Executive Secretary on AIDS Cell, CMAI, Dr. B. Wesley, Medical Superintendent of

Arogyavaram Medical Centre and Rev. Dr. W.S. Milton Jeganathan were the resource persons for this Workshop.

It is to be noted here that the urgency of this special ministry was emphasized and the participants were encouraged and motivated to involve in this special ministry in collaboration with the local NGOs and Government authorities. Particularly the participants were motivated to serve as 'Agents of Liberation' and 'Healing Communities' at the congregational level. Moreover, the follow up work has been planned so that the participants can carry out this mission in a more meaningful way in the local context.

STEP Programme at the East Kerala Diocese

A Short term Training in Evangelism for Participation (STEP) programme was held at HRDT Centre,

Melukavumottom, East Kerala Diocese on 23rd and 24th of June 2000. This training programme was inaugurated by the Bishop and CSI Moderator, Most Rev. Dr. K.J. Samuel. About 90 church workers participated in this special training programme. Rev. Mathew Varkey, Rev. Sam Oommen, Dr. George Samuel, (A Nuclear Scientist) and Rev. Dr. W.S. Milton Jeganathan were the



resource persons for this training programme. Rev. P.J. Joseph and Very Rev. P.D. John conducted the worship and Bible Studies. Along with the discussions on the methodologies and strategies to be adopted in the field, of evangelism there was great emphasis on being witness in the midst of contemporary challenges in India today. Particularly, mission in the context of religious pluralism and religious fundamentalism was discussed among the groups and the participants were equipped and encouraged to be catalysts for transformation through this special training.

Training in Mission (TIM) - Dornakal Diocese:

The Diocesan level training programme on Mission & Evangelism was conducted on 26th and 27th of June 2000 at the Cathedral in Dornakal. About 80 lay church work-

ers, evangelists, catechists and bible women participated in this training programme.

The Rt. Rev. A. Rajarathnam, Bishop of Dornakal and Chairman of the Department of Mission & Evangelism, Rev. Dr. George Mathew, Executive Secretary for Mission & Evangelism of the NCCI and The Rt. Rev. A. Rajarathnam were the resource persons for this programme. Particularly, gospel and culture, communication techniques in the midst of religious pluralistic context were focussed in detail during this programme.

By this programme catechists, evangelists, bible women

and church lay workers were encouraged and equipped so that they can serve as active witnesses in their local contexts.

*Rev. Milton Jeganathan
Mission & Evangelism, Director*

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SEMINAR ON 'GENDER AWARENESS'

A three day seminar on 'Gender Awareness' was organized by the Synod Youth Department and the CSI Women's Fellowship at the Vishranthi Nilayam, Bangalore from 19th to 21st of July, 2000. Eighty young people from the various dioceses of the CSI and other churches participated in this ecumenical gathering co-sponsored by the World Youth Project of the Christian Conference of Asia. The Rt. Rev. Dr. George Isaac, Chairman of the Synod Youth Department inaugurated the Seminar. Rev. Mrs. Nirmala Vasanthakumar then enabled the participants to identify the various manifestations of gender issues around us. Infanticide, foeticide, child labour, sexual abuse, domestic violence, gender roles, marginalisation in power structures, exhibitionism, commoditisation, voyeurism, sex trade, etc. were some of the issues which formed the platform of a profound discussion.

Mrs. Elizabeth Joy, the General Secretary of the Student Christian Movement in India then identified the various spheres of life where women are excluded. Mrs. Evangeline Rajkumar who gave the key note address identified how biological sexual differences are different from cultural by condition, masculinity and femininity. She led the youngsters into spheres of gender discrimination. She pointed out that a man on the street only means an

ordinary man but a woman on the street means a prostitute with clear sexual connotations and cultural undertones. She pointed out that even in grammar and bio-grammar gender issues are evident. She also said that though women put in more than 60% of the work done, they possess less than 10% of the world's possessions.

The participants then went into groups to do a critical analysis of the liturgies. They pointed out that a male chauvinistic patriarchal influence is evident in the liturgies including in the exclusive language that is used and the



subservience expected of women.

In the second Bible Study, Rev. Mrs. Nirmala Vasanthakumar expounded the original contextual background in which many of the controversial texts of the scriptures evolved. The texts looked at included the call to women to cover their heads during the worship and to keep silent in worship places.

Miss Oak Hee from the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, then narrated her experience on gender issues. She said that she was surprised to see women doing all the household work while the men just

slept late. How the girl children are meted out different standards of freedom right from school days and how expectations of discipline are different for boys and girls in India.

Mrs. Sarah Karunakaran, the Sector Coordinator (Training) of the BDM then enumerated various instances happening across South India where gender issues were at the centre. She also explained how the church is involving itself in the struggle for gender justice.

Mrs. Shirley Herford then did an in-depth analysis on how women are being depicted in the media, through advertisements, images, captions and hidden messages. She expounded on the objectification of womanhood. She agreed with Jacques Derrida that as long as the diad exists, gender imbalances could also exist. Our struggle therefore should be a search for equitability she urged.

Rev. L. E. Sahanam gave the definition at the Holy Communion Service in John 3:1-10 claiming that the genuine experiences of being born again is the experience of being born into the life realities of others.

Rev. Mrs. N. V. Kurien then guided a community Bible Study on the healing of the bent-over woman which was in fact an introduction of a model for re-reading the structures.

The participants were called upon to have memories of the future instead of dreams about the future. The participants found the entire experience truly meaningful and path-breaking.

Rev. Vinod Victor



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